



**SEIUHealthcare.**  
United for Quality Care

April 18, 2022  
Darnell Ford,  
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Middletown  
SEIU District 1199 New England  
Before the Appropriations Committee

***In Support of* HR 11 and SR 12: RESOLUTION PROPOSING APPROVAL OF AN AGREEMENT BETWEEN THE STATE OF CONNECTICUT AND THE STATE EMPLOYEES BARGAINING AGENT COALITION (SEBAC)**

Good Morning Senator Osten, Representative Walker and members of the Committee. My name is Darnell Ford and I work at Solnit South Children's Psychiatric Center. I have been the Lead Children's Services Worker there for the last 24 years. We work with kids who need support and services for their mental health when they are at the most vulnerable point in their lives. I am testifying today in support of House Resolution 11 and Senate Resolution 12.

At DCF Solnit Psychiatric Center, we have the capacity to care for more than 80 children, but due to the staffing shortage, we are only providing care for less than half. We've seen the reports of children languishing in emergency rooms. Yet, there's unused capacity that is offline at Solnit South. Ask ourselves, could we have helped more children in need and saved them from a lifetime of trauma, if we had those units functioning.

Right now our nation is caught in multiple crises—from the pandemic to racial injustice to economic hardship. People are trying to survive; people are trying to figure out their lives, they are trying to know what's going to happen to them next week. They've lost their jobs, they don't have mental health, they don't have health insurance, and everyone is struggling to take care of their families. The answer is not to shut services down, but instead expand services so that we can care for more people. This contract starts the conversation that is needed to meet the needs of our state. It allows us to expand wraparound services, home based support, and many other things.

I have been called a hero - an essential worker - and at times I feel like I'm helpless. Then you turn around and tell me that the services I provide are too expensive and we have to cut them. This contract starts expanding the healthcare services our communities – especially our communities of color - need now more than ever. Expanding the safety net that we have is critical right now. This contract looks to do that.

Thank you for your time.